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Leroy Garrett, Editor

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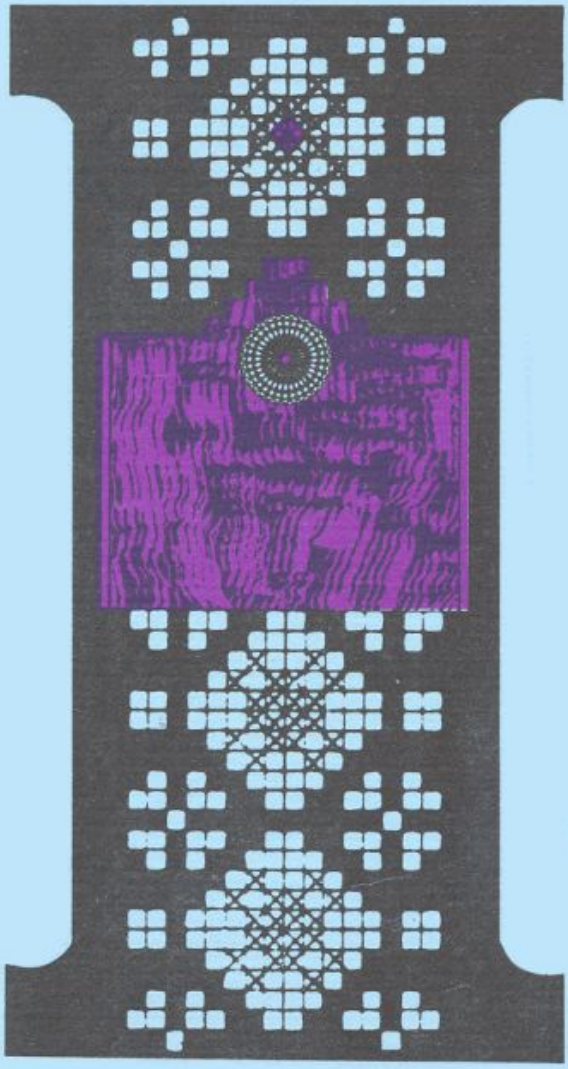

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Volume 15, No. 10 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **December 1973**

The Church of Christ: Yesterday and Today . . .

THE CHURCH AS A PILGRIM COMMUNITY

The Word became a human person, and lived awhile among us. —Jo. 1:14

In the likeness of Jesus, believers are but pilgrims and sojourners in this world. One idea of the incarnation is that Jesus "tented among us" for awhile, indicating that this world was not his home, just as it was not to be the permanent abode of his disciples. Barclay's translation of John 1:14, given above, makes the proper emphasis. The Word became a person, which was to be permanent since his humanity would eventually be transferred to heaven (1 Tim. 2:5), but his presence in this world was to be only for awhile. The Logos thus left heaven non-human and returned human, becoming both God and man. But the divine presence in this world, in the form of human flesh to be sure, was as temporary as a camper's tent, the Spirit using that kind of imagery to make his point.

Paul employs this same figure in referring to our bodies as but tents or tabernacles, which we will one day discard and go home to be with the Lord. As the NEB renders 2 Cor. 5:1: "We know that if the earthly frame that houses us today should be demolished, we possess a building which God has provided —a house not made by human hands, eternal, and in heaven." Peter goes at least as far as Paul in using the same figure: "I think it right to keep refreshing your memory so long as I still lodge in this body. I know that very soon I must leave it; indeed our Lord Jesus has told me so" (2 Pet. 1:13-14). The *Jerusalem Bible* underscores the point: … as long as I am in this tent … the time for taking off this tent …" This is the heart of the Christian hope, that the real person dwells in the body, which at death will be left behind as the believer goes to be with God, not unlike any sojourner who folds his tent and moves on into the distant horizon.

If Augustine could speak of the believing community in this world as the City of God, in contrast to the secular world which he called the City of Man, then we could just as well refer to ourselves as "the tent community". Just as Jesus "pitched his tent among us," which is what John 1:14 literally says, we can view ourselves as but pilgrims in this world. If we see people building their homes by laying heavy stones on deep foundations, it is evident that they are planning for something permanent.

But "a tent community" has the sense of pilgrimage, a people with intentions of moving on ere long. The figures are clear enough, but which one is a true picture of the church in our day? Not only is the world too much with us, but we behave as if this world is all there is to it.

The apostle has such a contrast in view when he writes in Phil. 3:19-20: "*Their* minds are set on earthly things. *We*, by contrast, are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ." Moffatt properly renders *politeuma* "a colony of heaven," which indicates that Paul is drawing a contrast between Philippi, as a colony of Rome, and the Church of Christ as a heavenly commonwealth. A Roman colony reflected in miniature the glory of the capital, bearing its likeness as a political unit. As a colony of heaven the saints of God reflect heaven's image, bearing Christ's likeness. He is not only saying that we are pilgrims here and that we *belong* elsewhere, but that as heavenly citizens we are mindful of spiritual things and seek to reflect God's likeness as much as Philippi reflects the image of Rome.

Paul makes it clear that believers are citizens of an earthly dominion (Rom. 13:1-7), a view that he does not contradict even when the state persecutes the believers, but earthly citizenship is not vital in his thinking. What is vital is that Jesus is Lord and it is his dominion to which the believer is dedicated. And so in Acts 17:7 he is accused of believing in "another emperor, one Jesus," even though the disciples generally refrained from calling Jesus by the monarch's title, *basileus (king* or *emperor)*, preferring instead to acknowledge him as the Lord of their lives. They believed that his Lordship extended over the pagan world as well, the whole universe in fact, even if the pagans did not realize it.

The disciples are therefore to be resident aliens in this world even if they are citizens of various political systems. Peter is saying this in 1 Pet. 1:1: "Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, sends greetings to all those living among foreigners" *(Jer. Bible)* or as the NEB puts it: "… to those of God's scattered people who lodge for a while in Pontus, etc." If our environment is not *alien* to our values and desires, we need to take a closer look as to how seriously we are taking our profession as saints of God. This is what the apostle is urging upon believers in 1 Pet. 2:11: "Dear friends, I beg you, as aliens in a foreign land, to abstain from the lusts of the flesh which are at war with the soul."

This certainly does not suggest that we are to be freaks in our communities, whether in dress, speech, or behavior. It does mean that the values we hold will set us apart as "a colony of heaven." The *Epistle of Diognetus* (about 150 A.D.) addresses itself to this point: "Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs. They do not live apart in cities of their own, nor do they speak some different language or practice some extraordinary way of life." He goes on to say: "Every foreign land is home to them, and every home is foreign. Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven." He says the difference is that they look for the incorruptible things while living in a corruptible world.

Heb. 11 sees the pilgrim community as including the saints of the Old Covenant: "They were not yet in possession of the things promised, but had seen them far ahead and hailed them, and confessed themselves no more than strangers or passing travelers on earth.

Those who use such language show plainly that they are looking for a country of their own" (11:13-14), and the writer goes on in 13:14 to apply the same thought to saints of the New Covenant: "Here we have no permanent home, but we are seekers after the city which was to come."

As a pilgrim community the saints not only looked for a city to come, but they were also persuaded of the transitoriness of this world. "Those who have to deal with the world should not become engrossed in it. I say this because the world as we know it is passing away," Paul says in 1 Cor. 7:31.

It was in being a *pilgrim* community that the Church of Christ upon earth is a *rejoicing* community. After all, those who give themselves to the allurements of this world not only find little joy, but they struggle to gain any meaning from it at all. And religion itself is not the answer to this freedom and joy: "Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and I will give you relief. Bend your necks to my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, my load is light" (Mt. 11:28f. NEB). Pilgrims are happy people with a mission; they know where they are going. Freedom and joy are theirs. As the believer looks to Jesus he assumes a destiny rather than a fate.

Johannes Weiss, that renowned scholar of primitive Christianity, says in reference to the joy of the believing pilgrims: "Unless one can understand this constant mood of victorious, jubilant happiness and confidence, he simply will not understand primitive Christianity. This is the feature that marked it off completely from Judaism" *(Earliest Christianity,* I, p. 41). He might have added: *unless the modern church cultivates this same victorious joy it will miss the point of being Christian.* Once we restore the sense of community to our church life, we will be in a position to recapture the notion of pilgrimage.

How can the faith of a people be explained who sang in prisons, rejoiced in dungeons, praised the Lord in the face of devouring lions, and prayed for those who abused them? Only in terms of having that victory that overcomes the world. From his prison cell Paul could write, "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice," only because he was assured that no human power could deny him of being with Jesus in the end. "I have the desire to depart and be with Christ" is the hope of a sojourner who has his face turned toward home.

The Church of Christ today can have that same victory that overcomes the world only by looking to Jesus and by being a pilgrim community with a destiny that bears it upward and homeward. —*the Editor*

As thou wilt; what thou wilt; when thou wilt. —*Thomas a' Kempis*

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Notes from a Travel Diary . . .

THE PROFESSOR AND HIS POODLE

My travels often take me into the homes of believers who are terribly discouraged by the *status quo*, and who are hopeful that my presence will help them to minimize the burden of hanging in until the church gains more maturity. Such was the case in a recent visit to a college town in Mississippi. By way of this publication I became a correspondent with a young history professor, and then through him I began to hear from a music professor, both with doctorates in their fields. Learning that I ventured forth in a simple ministry of encouragement, they asked if I might come their way. They were wi1ling to gather a few concerned friends for what if might be worth.

One of the preachers in the area that was invited became alarmed that I was coming around, and since panic is a weird contagion his calls to the elders of this town upset a number of people. Someone called an absolutely sound teacher at one of our Tennessee institutions to get confirmation that I was an absolutely unsound teacher. Whereupon the elders, protecting the flock from an invading wolf as only faithful shepherds would, called in the first professor referred to, informing him that he would forthwith and summarily be withdrawn from if he invited any of the congregation into his home to hear me. He was allowed to invite the other professor since he too was responsible for my coming, but that was it, except perhaps for a few preachers around who surely would not be damaged by such exposure.

Showing more conciliation than many free men would, the professor agreed to such terms, explaining that the main reason for my coming was to be with them and that I had not insisted on a large gathering. But still he was embarrassed by all this, and he assured me that he would understand if I cancelled the trip. I responded that such reaction as that was old hat to me, that I understood, and that I would come on if he still wanted me to. It was under those conditions that I flew into the Bayou state, being met at the airport by the two young professors, who turned out to be among the most delightful people I have ever met. The first afternoon of conversation was worth the trip, but the three of us were hardly prepared for what happened to us that weekend.

It was that day that I met Lisa, a poodle that I went for even though I don’t normally take to poodles. Lisa is obviously intelligent, her keen eyes sparkling in a solid white background, immaculately groomed of course. One almost has to go for Lisa, in self-

defense if on no other grounds, for she is effervescently friendly, once she is adjusted to your being around. She now has a male companion, another poodle named Bozo, who appears to be extremely nervous, it being said of him that he suffers from an inferiority complex in the presence of the elegant Lisa. But Bozo should not feel inadequate, for he is always receiving caresses from the professor's lovely wife, while Lisa must be content with being a man's favorite.

The first night there we had an assembly of six or eight men, mostly preachers in the area who do not "fellowship" one another. They do not get along nearly as well as Lisa and Bozo, but they faired better than usual that night since they had me as a common concern. It was a meeting of limited success, I would say, for I can no longer get excited over situations in which brothers have come to debate. But the two profs had a good time, so that was all right with me. The next night was better, for the two small families and I dined quietly together and talked about our common problems around an open Bible.

The two brothers and their wives have had a hard time of it in their congregation, the situation being such that their spiritual needs have not only gone unsatisfied, but their desire to be free men has been consistently frustrated. Though still respected teachers in the local state college, their classes have been taken from them in the congregation. Though dedicated and faithful, they are accused of being *liberal* with all its attending implications. Their reasonableness has a sweetness and gentleness about it that I wish I had more of, which was manifest in their unnecessary capitulation to the browbeating tactics of an eldership who presumed to dictate whom one can invite into the privacy of his own home. A fearless eldership would have said, "Dear brothers, if it is important to you to visit with this man from Texas, then it is important to us. Frankly, we are uneasy about some things we have heard about him, so if you are going to be inviting our people to hear him, we too would like to come along just to satisfy ourselves about it all." But even in the face of such gutter tactics as threats and reprisals they yielded in a spirit of love and tenderness. I commend the spirit of the sheep to the shepherds!

When Sunday morning came my hosts thought I might want to visit a congregation other than their own, perhaps one of those represented in the preachers' gathering on Friday evening, a "non-cooperative" group or a Christian Church. But I suggested that we go to their own Church of Christ as they usually did, except that I did not want to be an occasion for upsetting the preacher, making him feel obligated to preach to me, however indirectly, to the boredom of everyone, including me. Having observed on Friday night that he is the kind that comes with prepared notes to meet a new brother, I figured he might not be able to stay with a lesson hopefully designed to edify the saints, but would have to give me some special attention if I were in his audience, at least through innuendo. But I grossly underestimated his lack of discipline in this direction!

It turned out to be the ghastliest experience at a Lord's day assembly that I recall, and it was surely the fiercest, rudest, and most inexcusable behavior I have ever witnessed on the part of grown men claiming to be disciples of the Prince of Peace. Not only was my name called repeatedly in the minister's remarks, but I was branded as a false teacher with sinister purposes. An assembly of some 300 souls, who presumably gathered to hear the Word, were warned that this dangerous heretic was sitting in their very midst, that they were not to speak with him, accept any literature from him, or have anything to do with him.

I had a few copies of *Restoration Review* in my Bible and had just given one to a brother sitting next to me. "He's talking about me," I whispered to him, thinking he might want to hand me back the contraband lest he get caught with it. "I figured that," he said in reply, but he kept the copy nonetheless.

Not only was I scolded for forty minutes or so, excerpts from my writings going back for 20 years being read in what must have been to the utter confusion of the audience, but the names of the professors were called as part of a plot, and the "secret meetings" in their homes were maligned. This incredible rudeness bewildered me, for what else could those men have done to satisfy the demands of their leaders for the sake of peace? They received an OK to have me in their homes, restricted in attendance to those cleared by the elders. Now they were being berated in spite of their conciliatory spirit. I am used to being the subject of such ecclesiastical madness and clerical gyrations, and have accepted it as part of the role of a reformer, but it hurt me deeply to see these good men abused in their own church. After all, I would be moving on, while they would have to live in the situation on and on.

One would have supposed that that would have been enough, but two of the elders joined in the fracas. One of them commended the minister for his courage, exposing a false teacher in their very midst as he had done, and he issued further warnings against me, telling the people to accept no invitations to any meetings. The second elder further exposed me, informing the assembly that the false teacher in question had tried to do his evil work in the morning class and that the elders had defended the gospel against my onslaught.

In my heart of hearts I had to demur in what both men said. It is hardly courageous to be a bruiser. Any fool can browbeat when he has the protection of the sacred desk, reserved only for himself. It is more daring to join in an open forum, where those that are accused have an opportunity to present the other side.

The class that the elder referred to, a small group of no more than eight or ten, was studying the confession. They had presumed the confession to be "a step" in the plan of salvation, one of five steps in fact: hearing, faith, repentance, *confession,* and baptism. I pointed out that the confession has no such place in scripture, that the relevant passages

such as Ro. 10:9-10 apply to the believer's continual profession of Jesus. I observed that there is no such step in any of the cases of conversion, except in the instance of the eunuch in Acts 8, which is conceded to be an interpolation and is thus omitted in other versions. I pointed to the difficulty of finding such a "step" in the conversion of the Pentecostians or of Paul.

The elders disagreed with what I said, which was all right with me, but I could hardly see it as a defense of the gospel. Not only was I not denying the gospel, but was trying to protect it from the arbitrary traditions of men. I've even known of cases where people were re-immersed because someone overlooked "taking their confession." Walter Scott, that great pioneer preacher, is the one who gave us the five-step technique, to which I have no particular objection. But his five steps were: faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and the Holy Spirit. He left out the confession and added the Holy Spirit, which I presume to be a double perversion of the gospel!

Bless us, if ignorance were a virtue, we would be an illustrious people.

Well, that was a mad Sunday in Mississippi. It was all so incredible. The minister's sermon was on liberalism, with me serving as the arch liberal. He defined the term to refer to those who interpret the Bible *subjectively,* allowing it to mean whatever their feelings dictate, but not really accepting it authoritatively.

Only three days before I had lectured to a college class in Dallas on existentialism and had drawn an important distinction between subjective and objective views of truth, pointing out that existentialists favor the former. By way of illustration I observed that the charismatic movement has existentialist elements, subjectivism being one of them, especially in the notion that the Spirit continually reveals truth to one's subconscious. I identified my own view of truth as objective, believing as I do that God was not only objectively (really and concretely) in Jesus, but that the truth He vouchsafed to the apostles and prophets is *propositional.* And so our feelings must always be judged in the light of what the scriptures reveal in propositional truths and not the other way around. The students probably thought me to be old-fashioned.

And here I was in my own church and among my own people being accused of what I have always taught against. There is nothing in any of my writings that remotely suggests anything but an adamant stand for the objective nature of God's revelation in both the Living Word and the written Word. But I have learned that when men's suspicions have been aroused against one there is little that he can do except to pray for saner days. If one shows benevolence, it only confirms that all his talk about love and brotherhood is part of a sinister plot.

If he humbles himself and tries to make the best of a situation, it only reveals his feigned sincerity. If he turns to reason and seeks to answer resourcefully, he is only showing off his insipid education. If he resigns in silence, he is but acknowledging the

weakness of his cause. If he goes elsewhere to church, it confirms that he has no conviction and that he "fellowships anybody and everybody." If he ventures to meet with his own, he is up to something. It would indeed be a frustrating situation for anyone who has any other ambition but to please Jesus.

While the preacher was doing his thing, I was having thoughts that he could never have guessed. I thought of the occasional brother through the years who has bothered to apologize to folk like Carl Ketcherside (whose name was also called) and me for just such outbursts against us. In a unity meeting one preacher confessed his long-harbored hatred of me, saying that he now loves me. Sometimes they write, sometimes they call by, to say they are sorry for what they said years ago. Oftentimes they themselves are being berated as they once berated. So I chose to entertain that possibility with this man. "Father, forgive him, for he doesn't realize what he is doing," was my prayer, and in my final greeting, I told him that I loved him and invited him to visit me in Denton sometime.

He and the elders sinned against their own congregation more than against me. They moved them to near violence, verbal if not physical. One brother, a complete stranger to me, accosted me with no greeting at all, accusing me of dividing a church somewhere in Louisiana, a town that I had never heard of, much less visited. Another brother was brutal, consigning me to hell if I did not repent. I put a hand on his shoulder and asked him how he could afford to serve as judge and jury over the souls of his brothers in the light of warnings against such in scripture, quoting one of them to him. "Ah, you just use verses like that to your own advantage," was his reply. I reminded him that he really had no idea about what I believed. He assured me that he had all the information he needed from what the preacher had said. It was all uncanny!

A brother approached one of the professors and "withdrew fellowship" from him right on the spot, whatever that may mean. An atmosphere of hate, suspicion and rejection had been created in an assembly gathered to break bread in the name of him who urges us to "Love one another, even as I have loved you."

I apologized to one of the elders for being present, that I would not have been in the assembly had I any idea that I was going to upstage Jesus and be the subject of the hour. "It would have been more edifying," I said, "if the people could have heard about Jesus instead of Leroy Garrett." When he proceeded to talk about defending the church against error, I said to him: "Now listen, my brother, there's no need your playing games with me, for the truth is that you don't know beans about what I teach. I know it and you know it." But he did too know my teachings. The previous evening the preacher and the elders had a strategy meeting, and the elders became informed of one Leroy Garrett, heretic, as the preacher read to them from my writings!

I can walk away from such insanity unscathed, realizing that such struggles are part of our ministry to a sick church, but my heart ached for the two teachers and their wives. We had planned to dine out following the assembly, but the group was more interested in prayer and fasting than in eating. Repairing to one of their homes, I tried to explain to them why things like that have to happen. I took the story of Jesus, tracing his pilgrimage from heaven to earth, from synagogue to synagogue, showing how he was rejected by his own people, his own family, his own brothers, and how his home congregation in Nazareth not only rejected him but tried to kill him. Why? He was a threat to them, they thought. Even when he healed the man called Legion, the one with many demons, the townspeople reacted by asking Jesus to leave, for they didn't want him around. They feared the changes that his power would bring to their lives. Our problem is as simple and profound as that. Never yet in history has a reformer gone unpersecuted.

They responded to it all so beautifully, loving and praying for those who had abused them, and thanking God that they could suffer for His name. The wives showed quiet submission to the Lord's will, their faces radiant with joy and hope and their lips free of rancor and bitterness. It was a glorious moment that God gave me in His kingdom, a mountaintop experience, a thrilling victory of love over malice. They were hurt, to be sure, but it was the kind of pain that builds strength of soul. The history prof is an especially sensitive man and it was evident that the wounds had cut deep into his soul. But Jesus was there in his heart and I knew he would find victory in letting the Lord put it all together for him. All he needed was time.

Once our session together was over, the door was opened and in rushed Lisa and Bozo with their usual jubilance. The professor, still for the most part speechless, gathered Lisa into his arms. It was as if I could see him reflected in her concerned eyes. Had she not been a dog, I'd sworn she could tell something was wrong. She cuddled in his arms, nestled her head under his chin, and cleansed the moisture from his cheeks with tender licks of her tongue.

At that moment an indescribable horror came over me that chilled the full length of my backbone. Had I been a Frost or a Burns, it might have inspired a poem. The drama before my eyes found me saying to myself, "My God, has it come to this, that a man finds more compassion from a dumb brute than he does from his own brothers in Christ in the house of God." Only then did I choose to weep, but I didn't have it in me. —*the Editor*

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MOTTO OF A MOVEMENT -A RECONSIDERATION

By Thomas Langford

I suppose it is characteristic of all religious movements to generalize their programs into slogans which will simply and favorably convey to others the movements' peculiar principles. What we call the Restoration Movement seems to have been even more interested in such slogans than other groups. Our fathers have always sensed the uniqueness of their platform within Christendom, and felt that its singularity would naturally appeal to all men, if only the message could be presented clearly enough.

One motto growing out of our movement has always been especially attractive to me, because of its balanced appeal to both conviction and tolerance —to both loyalty and love. "In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things, charity." Although this motto did not take its origin among our people, it has had a prominent place among our slogans almost from the beginning. Its popularity doubtless stems from its scripturalness on the one hand, and its appeal to common sense on the other. It is reminiscent of several passages of scripture (1 Cor. 16:13; Rom. 14:14-15; Eph. 4:1-7), and its thrust is incontrovertibly true to the spirit of all scripture. I never knew of anyone who challenged or disapproved the motto.

Yet the fact that all of us, in the numerous factions of the movement, have used the motto with equal fervency and frequency would indicate that there are inherent weaknesses, either in the motto or in our application of it. For the slogan which appeals for unity has become the mutual watchword of numerous sectarian establishments.

It is evident that in earlier days the Restoration Movement found less difficulty in the application of the motto. There were fewer glaring inconsistencies between the advocacy and the practice of unity principles. This is not to say that there were no differences. There were — differences perhaps more substantial than any which divide us today. Yet, in the earlier days, division was not so popular a means of dealing with these differences. Mutual faith in Christ was more cherished.

The spirit of the pioneers is well reflected in the seminal document of the movement, Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address.* In fact, the motto we are considering seems almost to have been inspired by this document. The "sole purpose" of the *Declaration*

> was to promote "simple Evangelical Christianity," and for this end … to countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibited a manifest conformity to doctrine, zeal, and diligence: such as practiced that simple, original form of Christianity expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without inculcating anything of human authority, of private opinion, or of inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith or worship of the Christian

> church; or anything as a matter of Christian faith or duty for which there cannot be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent."

"In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty" —surely the *Declaration* spells out these positions clearly. Nowhere is there greater insistence upon agreement in essentials. Yet, as regarded opinions, as the document goes on to say, "although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so." Essentials and opinions were thus clearly distinguished and properly emphasized. It was upon this basis that the movement flourished for 75 years.

Inasmuch as the following 75 years have seen as much to destroy the movement as the first 75 to establish it, we may well ask what went wrong. Wherein was the weakness of a motto used so generally by both a united and a divided movement?

One of the obvious conditions of our lapsed concord is the fact that we can no longer distinguish (with mutual assent) between the principal poles of the motto. We are no longer agreed upon the essentials and the areas of opinion. In every case our divisions have come at that point where a practice or a position is deemed essential by some and opinion by others. Look at a few of the dividing issues: missionary societies, instrumental music, Sunday Schools, premillennial reign of Christ, Communion vessels, Herald of Truth and orphan homes. Without exception, each issue is clearly drawn on the one side as a matter of opinion or a scriptural deduction, and on the other side as a compromise of "The Faith," an unwarranted departure from "manifest conformity to the original standard."

The difficulty is in the fact that in every case some have taken as essential, issues about which a variety of deductions can be made from the scriptures. In none of these instances does the Bible speak so clearly that one may take a position on one side or the other without the application of involved human reasoning. Of such things, the venerable *Declaration* said:

> as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion; unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the Church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment, or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the Church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

How clear, how sweetly reasonable, and yet how foreign in tenor to current pulpits and sectaries.

Let me take a case in point, a case with which I am most familiar, the Sunday School issue. Having been reared from childhood in a tradition which opposed the organized Sunday School, I think myself competent to represent the arguments against the institution. These arguments have generally resolved themselves into three basic points: 1) the Sunday School was not an apostolic institution and is thus without the sanction of a "thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent"; 2) the Sunday School requires a fragmentation of the assembly into classes, thus destroying the pattern of a single assembly, as set forth in 1 Corinthians 14, and confirmed by every other reference to the gathered church in the New Testament scriptures; and 3) the Sunday School usually employs women teachers in public capacities, a violation of specific injunctions (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12) as well as the spirit of all the New Testament scripture's teaching concerning ideal womanhood.

Now the fact that many, perhaps most of you, will disagree with our deductions on these points demonstrates, to some degree at least, that they are not the "manifest essentials" "expressly exhibited on the sacred page" which must constitute the grounds of our unity. This is not to say that our deductions are unimportant, or necessarily inaccurate. It *is* to say, *they are our deductions,* and therefore binding on others only insofar as they "perceive the connection" and assent to their validity. Hence, they "ought not to be made terms of Christian communion." However important they are to those of us who "perceive the connection," it is only our own consciences which may properly be limited by these deductions. They will determine our own practice, but should not be the basis of judgment of others, or the criterion of our fellowship with God's other children in all the real "essentials" of the faith.

I may be wrong, but I cannot see but that all of this applies with equal validity to every issue which has divided our movement. Instrumental music may be debated, deliberated, and debunked by those who "perceive the connection," but until it can be shown to be a matter "expressly exhibited," enjoined or prohibited, its use or non-use must remain in the realm of deduction, of human reasoning, and not in the realm of essentials, where we may and must have unity. Those of us who deduce it wrong must worship without it, while those whose study does not condemn it must be governed by their own light. Parenthetically, it is my impression that many of the latter would gladly forego the aid and pleasure of the organ if they were not consequently forced to surrender also the whole principle of liberty in opinion. To give up the organ as a matter of personal liberty would profit little if one must thenceforth be totally governed by another's conscience, which may object next to songbooks, four-part harmony, or even congregational singing itself.

Just how broad may our fellowship be? How much difference will that fellowship tolerate? Alexander Campbell repeatedly indicated that he would make nothing a test of fellowship which God had not made a condition of salvation. Although this may sound pretty broad on the surface, I think it provides us with a wise means of discrimination. If the church is the family of God, and that family consists of all who have been born into it, when I learn what it takes to experience such birth and am born again, I have entered into the fellowship of God and all of his other children. Regardless of the differences which may exist among the children because of spiritual opportunity and maturity, we are all in the fellowship, so long as we retain our common relationship to the Father. Because one man accepts the Sunday School and therefore works differently (in that respect) from the other whose study leads him to reject it, we are not therefore to break the fellowship. The brother may indeed be in error on the Sunday School; his misunderstanding does not therefore make him no longer a child of God but a son of Satan. Suppose the organ in worship is wrong after all; does that mean that the brother whose understanding does not say so is therefore consigned to Hell? Heaven help us if our salvation does indeed depend upon perfect understanding and perfect behavior. I have no doubt that God tolerates mistakes on the part of all of us, so long as we are seeking and really committed to truth. If he does not, we all may as well give up; none of us will be saved. Thank God, though, his grace is not proportioned to our perfection, of understanding *or* obedience!

Perhaps the best description of the essential unity is found after all in Ephesians 4:4-6. When in *One Faith* we accept the *One Lord,* through the testimony and conviction of *One Spirit,* and yield our wills in the *One Baptism,* the *One God* adds us to the *One Body,* where we share the *One Hope*. Debate is superfluous at this point —we are thus in the church of God, the fellowship of the saints (saved ones). These are the essentials upon which our unity must be based, upon which we may stand as we study, argue, analyze in the area of opinion —that area where we utilize the human intelligence to grasp the further teaching of Christ together. Such study and deduction belong to what Thomas Campbell called “the after and progressive edification of the church.”

Certainly we should continue to study issues which have divided us in the past —but always *as brethren* — in the fellowship together — mutually dependent upon the grace which saves us in spite of our imperfect apprehension of total truth.

Thus the motto yet stands, as valid as ever, and with potential for the healing of our divisions. The three elements of the motto are interdependent. Unity in essentials gives us the firm base upon which to allow liberty of opinion. Conversely, the exercise of freedom of study allows us to appreciate more fully the unity we have in the common salvation. But in all things, united in faith and differing in opinion, charity — that attribute in which we

best reflect our kinship to God, that grace by which we share with others the special dispensation which God has granted us all through Christ — prevails, and calls us on to perfection. —*Graduate School, Texas Tech University, Lubbock 79409*

Men come to their meridian at various periods of their lives. - *John Henry Newman*

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THE "IS" AND "IS NOT" OF FELLOWSHIP

By Dallas Burdette

We must distinguish between certain terms used by the Holy Spirit to communicate the thoughts of God to man. In not doing this we have brought about chaos in the ecclesia of God. One such distinction is between *unity* and *fellowship.* Fellowship is the result of unity, for we cannot have fellowship unless we are in the unity for which Jesus prayed in Jn. 17. I will say more about this in a few minutes.

We must distinguish between *unity* and *conformity.* Carl Ketcherside has expressed it this way: "We have sought to base a superstructure of religion upon attainment to knowledge and wisdom. We have predicated the idea that unity is based upon conformity. But conformity in the absolute demands equal ability of perception, simultaneous arrival at perfection in knowledge, and universality of wisdom. If we begin retrenchment from plenary conformity we surrender the whole system and acknowledge that it is fallacious. For if conformity must not be absolute, then who is to determine in how many things leniency may be shown, and which things fall in each category. The one who attempted such legislation would usurp the room of God."

We must also distinguish between *fellowship* and *agreement.* Fellowship does not come as a result of our agreement upon matters of opinion and interpretation, but our ability to reach agreement upon these things may come as a result of our fellowship. We are not one in opinion; we are one in Christ. It is not our study, acquisition of knowledge, learning of the law, or ability as teachers or expounders which make us children of God. We become children by procreation not education.

Next, we need to distinguish between *gospel* and *doctrine*, a distinction drawn by the writers of the New Covenant Scriptures. There is as much difference between the gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine as there is between the sperm from which a child is begotten and the food which he eats after he is born. Paul knew the difference between the

seed from which life came and the daily bread upon which the children fed. He knew the difference between gospel and doctrine, and between faith and knowledge. He knew that the gospel brought us into being while the doctrine was essential to our growth and well being, and he did not make a test of fellowship out of spiritual digestion. Those who confuse chastisement of a child with begettal and cannot distinguish between correction and conception are in a sad predicament.

We must distinguish between *fellowship* and *endorsement*, which is one of our major "hang ups" in the brotherhood today. We are under the impression that to have fellowship with one another is to endorse whatever each person believes, which cannot be true. We are in fellowship with God, but who is so foolish as to believe that God endorses everything we do or believe. In Paul's letter to the Romans he said, "Welcome the man who is weak in the faith, but do not begin by introducing him to discussions about debatable matters." (14:1, Barclay). "So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you." (15:7, Paraphrased). But someone may ask, "Are we in fellowship with error?" No, we are in fellowship with fellows. The question is often asked, "Are you in fellowship with brothers in error?" My answer is yes, because this is the only kind of brothers that I know about. All truth is true, but not all truth is essential to our salvation; all error is error, but not all error will condemn one's soul. Absolute freedom from error is not a condition of salvation for all men would be damned. We are saved not by attainment to a certain degree of knowledge, but by faith in Christ Jesus. All truth is essential to our well-being, but some truth is essential to our being. Let us consider our physical body for an analogy. All the members of our body are for our well-being, but if we lost a leg, arm, or finger, we would be only handicapped or incapacitated. But if we lost our head, we would be dead. The same analogy may be applied to Jesus. We may be wrong about some doctrinal points and still be saved, but if we are wrong about Jesus, we will be lost.

In the *New Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Stauffer said, "En Christoi" (in Christ) implies the unity of the people of God … This unity of the church does not imply uniformity. It is organic unity." When we speak of keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we are not speaking of having fellowship with those not in this unity. Those that are not in the unity for which Jesus prayed are not in Christ. Therefore, we cannot have fellowship with them. The following could not be in fellowship: atheists, infidels, those who deny the messiahship of Jesus, those who do not accept the Scriptures, those who say: I'm going to do my own thing." These cannot be in the fellowship, because they are not in the unity for which Jesus prayed. Paul said to the Ephesians, "Spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives." —The New English Bible. He says that we should "spare no effort." To what end? *Not to produce a unity, not to create a unity, not to try to arrive at a unity, but to "keep the unity." The unity*

is already in existence. It is unity of all those who have believed the message expounded in chapters 1-3 of Ephesians.

Jesus prayed, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (Jn. 17:11). The unity that Jesus speaks of is the unity of those who, in contradistinction to all others, have believed the truth concerning Him and His work. In God's plan there is but one fact which must be performed, to bring one into that glorious fellowship of the redeemed. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he said, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13).

Jesus mentions the nature of this unity: "that they may be one, as we are." In verses 20-23 of the same chapter of John our Lord elaborates on this subject further: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be one, even as we are: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

We notice at once that the essential character of the unity about which our Lord is speaking is that it is comparable to the unity that exists between the Father and the Son. It is also comparable to the unity between the Son and the people for whom He is praying. It is the highest mystery of the Christian faith. This unity for which Jesus prayed is not external organizational unity. This unity is the unity of persons. It is a fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with all of us who believe.

This means that the unity in the *ecclesia* of God involves this fellowship of being. When we are born again, born of the Spirit, or become partakers of the divine nature, we all share in this unity for which Jesus prayed. And so He calls us into the fellowship.

There can be no unity at all in our Lord's sense apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit who creates within the believer this new nature. Paul said, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

This unity is not a matter of friendship. It is deeper than that. It is like a family relationship. You are born into a family. You may disagree with members of your family, but you cannot get rid of the relationship. *—2428 Elsmeade Dr., Montgomery, Al. 36111*

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THE PERILS OF AN INHERITED RELIGION

Most of us are what we are because our parents were before us. Hardly any of us have come out of Hinduism or Buddhism, or even out of atheism or skepticism. Many in Churches of Christ have, to be sure, come from the Baptists or Methodists, often due to marital influences; but this is not really a basic change from the Protestant heritage that belongs to us all. We not only look back to the heroes of the Old and New Testaments, but to Luther and Calvin, Knox and Zwingli, as well as Campbell and Stone. Ours is a great heritage, but since it is indeed a heritage rather than an original experience it has its perils.

God intended, of course, that ours be an inherited religion. We cannot all be Abrahams. Our father in the faith stood virtually alone in his trust in the one God of Heaven. Even Terah his father served the gods of the land (Josh. 24:2). Abraham grew up amidst gross polytheism, with his neighbors not only worshiping the moon and the stars but objects of wood and stone. They even sacrificed their firstborn to assuage the anger of their imagined deities. The patriarch's response was so sensitive that history knows him as the friend of God and the father of the faithful.

Abraham was more the founder of a religion than the inheritor of one, which is admittedly a unique position. Even his son Isaac and grandson Jacob were more inheritors of the tradition he had vouchsafed to them than they were creators of it.

Jacob was the third generation of Hebrew religion, and the peril of being an inheritor was already apparent. God had not spoken to him personally as he had to Abraham, bidding him to venture into a strange land, nor had he heard God speak at the last moment to save him from death as had his father Isaac. In fact his inherited faith had not done much for Jacob. It did not keep him from filching his brother's birthright, and he bore a name that must have been appropriate to his character, for it meant *swindler.*

But Jacob at last had his own encounter with the Lord. Emerson believed that God has a private door into every man's life, and that there is no stereotyped way in which He encounters men. It may be so, for God sent an angel to "wrestle" with Jacob, an encounter that lasted all night, leading to Jacob's request for a blessing, which was not given until he confessed that he was a swindler, that he was indeed "Jacob." It was not unlike the experience of his father Isaac, for he too could say, "I have seen God face to face and my life is spared" (Gn. 32:30). He was given a new name, Israel, one in keeping with his new direction. It was also for Jacob to dream of a ladder that stretched from earth to heaven, whereon angels were descending and ascending. Here he was not only given a renewal of the land promise made to Abraham and Isaac, but in the vision of angels he must have been able to see their role in ministering to man's needs.

Few of us experience such drama in our pilgrimage. Many are Christians in the same way men are Germans or Canadians — because their fathers were. An inherited religion is likely to be vapid to those who do not seek, as Jacob did, God's special blessing. One peril

is that of failing to create in men a deep sense of sin. One does not long for God unless he really feels a need for him. Paul could say, as few men ever do, “Miserable creature that I am, who is there to rescue me out of this body doomed to death,” only when he really believed that it was “God alone, through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Ro. 7:24). Like Isaiah, he did not see God’s holiness until he saw his own sin, or vice-versa.

Another peril of our being inheritors of so much is that we take it all for granted. It is easy to reduce it all to a matter of a few externals while never really capturing the power of religion. Hb. 11 tells of the faithful who were “stoned, sawn in two, put to the sword, went about dressed in skins of sheep or goats, in poverty, distress, and misery.” The writer assures us that “They were too good for a world like this.” In taking our heritage for granted we become like the world that was unworthy of them. One wonders if we can really appreciate what God has done for us apart from suffering. Have we understood the Bible when it assures us that “It is through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

Then there is the peril of growing lax in propagating a faith that has been passed along to us. Like the Olympic runners who bear the fire from its original site in Athens to the place of the games get further and further away as the torch is passed from man to man, so we as torch-bearers of the original gospel run the risk of allowing twenty centuries of history to dull our sense of urgency. The fact that the earliest disciples were at the source of the river from which we drink far downstream is one reason why they turned the world upside down. They not only believed that the gospel is the power of God for salvation, but that the world in which they lived was lost. Jesus was real because sin was real. If we really believed that Jesus is the only ultimate answer to the human predicament, we would surely be a fellowship of concerned ones, intense in our desire to bring men to the Savior. When Elton Trueblood speaks of the modern church as the greatest mission field in the world today, he must have meant that it is subject to being converted to this sense of urgency.

While ours is an inherited religion, it is not an inheritance of systems and institutions. It is not like inheriting money or property from a distant relative. God has given us a Person who is both our teacher and Lord. The eternal Word became man, and he is ours to love as friend and brother. And so our inheritance need not be cold and far removed from its source. We can be as near the source as were Peter and John, and through Jesus the God of heaven can be even closer to us than He was to Abraham. It is therefore more like standing at the mouth of a deep well that is ever gushing out springs of fresh water than standing alongside a river whose stream has become polluted in its endless meandering from its faraway source. Each can draw as deeply from that well as he desires.

Through the Spirit's indwelling each believer becomes his own source of strength. "If any man thirst, let him come to me! Let the man come and drink who believes in me," says our Lord, showing that each of us can partake of the original resource of power. "As scripture says: From his breast shall flow fountains of living water," says Jesus, and the record tells us that in saying this he was speaking of the Spirit which those who believe in him are to receive. (Jn. 7:37-39) —*the Editor*

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BOOK NOTES

Carl Ketcherside is beginning his last two years with Mission Messenger. Many of our readers are also readers of this seminal journal, but if you are not you may get the last two years for only 2.00, which may well be the best of all. Address: 139 Signal Hill Dr., St. Louis 63121.

For just 1.50 we will send you *The Christian Warfare and Armour* by James Philip, which is an exposition on Paul's armour in Eph. 6. The author speaks out of his own experience in reference to the believer's warfare with the powers of darkness.

The *Restoration Mind*, the bound volume for 1971-72 of this journal, has now been mailed to those who ordered it. Just now the price is 4.50 for the double volume. It might have to be more later, but if you'll order your copy now, that will be the price. We are trying to keep prices low, and for a 400 page, hardbound book with artistic jacket, that is a good price. And you'll like the dust jacket, featuring a likeness of A. Campbell by Talmage Minter, which illustrates our series on Campbell's travel letters.

Eerdmans has issued a *Handbook to the Bible*, which within about 700 pages covers about everything. Highly illustrated in rich colors, it is both an introduction to the Bible and an encyclopedia of sorts. Falling into four parts, it has one section on the Bible and its setting, another on the OT books and then one on the NT writings, and then one dealing with key themes. The book of Joel, for instance, is clearly introduced and outlined (without the text itself), and is illustrated by a large, colorful picture of a plague of locusts. It is also rich in archaeological information, profusely illustrated. The type' is most readable, making this an attractive volume for all ages, and it would be an ideal gift for a high school or college graduate. 12.50.

We urge you to read more in Restoration history. You will enjoy *Biography of John T. Johnson*, the story of a politician turned preacher, a coworker of Alexander Campbell. Only 4.50. Also important is *Christians Only* by J. D. Murch, a paperback account of the

Restoration Movement, very readable and informative. 3.95. We have several copies of the now out-of-print *Fool of God* by Louis Cochran at 3.50. For awhile yet you can get *The Life of Benjamin Franklin,* another exciting story of a pioneer preacher. 4.00.

The Becomers by Keith Miller is billed by some as a book that will change your life. His answer to the question "What Happens in Conversion?" would suggest that. A *becomer* is one who is willing to take risks for God. 5.95.

If you are interested in C. S. Lewis, we can send you *The Best of* C. S. *Lewis* in one beautifully bound hardback for 4.95. It contains his five best books: *Screwtape Letters, Great Divorce, Miracles, Case for Christianity, Christian Behaviour.*

An ideal gift for a child up to 12 is *The Children's Living Bible,* which is the complete Bible beautifully bound and illustrated. Our best bargain at 3.95.

For only 2.50 we can send you Francis Schaeffer's *The God Who is There,* the place to start in reading this exciting writer.

We have *Dare to Discipline* in paperback for only 1.95. The chapter on "The Miracle Tools" may convince you that there are still (or can be) miracles! A must for parents with growing children.

Break Down the Walls is a Christian cry for racial justice, but it does this in an extensive survey of racism around the world, especially South Africa. It has a chapter on the Biblical message and racism and an appendix on interracial marriage, all authored by a Dutchman, Johannes Verkuyl. 2.95.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

I want you to know at long last that more and more people are learning to love and appreciate what you stand for and what you have been able to see and understand years ago that we are just now beginning to see. *—Nelson Henning, 1108 Virginia St., Lake Charles, LA. 70601*

In reference to your item on the church treasury, how do you think a fellow can get deductions on his income tax if he makes his contributions through a treasury unrecognized as "non-profit" by the U. S. government?!! *—Bob Fife, Milligan College, Tn. 37682*

Traditionalism and man-made dogmas, along with a neglect of New Testament simplicity, are still strong these days. We must remind ourselves of the centrality of Jesus Christ and him crucified. Our need of Him, apart from system-building, has never been greater. —*Joe Hale, 6100 Hibbling Ave., Springfield, VA.22150*

I think of you often and continually pray for your ministry. Thank God for our freedom! Praise Him for allowing us to be free to lovingly serve Christ! —*Steve Molnar, Central Church of Christ, Houston, Tx.*

The review of Hadwin's thesis was exciting. It amazes me that these young men are willing to think for themselves in that environment. It further amazes me that his thesis was approved by that graduate Bible faculty. Praise the Lord for bright young minds such as Hadwin's! —*Dick Smith, 1420 Drury Dr., Dallas, Tx. 75232*

I want to study your observations on Hadwin's thesis. I have recently read the thesis, and although it is the most serious (and best) challenge to the views set forth in *We Be Brethren,* I think he misses the point widely. Some of these times when I can get better caught up I will probably publish some observations on our differences. —*J. D. Thomas, Abilene Christian College, Abilene, Tx. 79601*

(As I pointed out in my review of Hadwin's work, a thesis can be "approved" by a faculty because of its scholarship without necessarily being *endorsed.* It is wholesome when faculty and students can freely differ in their mutual search for truth even when the findings threaten the *status quo.* It reminds me of Harvard! If all our graduate people will show the spirit of both Hadwin and Dr. Thomas, as indicated above, I predict a bright future for our youth in terms of getting a real education. Since truth has nothing to fear, let's lay it all out in the open and let the people decide for themselves. —*Ed.*)

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